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ABSTRACT

A survey of campus laboratory school activity in the last few years reveals a change in roles from one primarily directed at training student teachers to one emphasizing the four functions of research, observation, demonstration, and participation. Present emphasis on field-based preservice and inservice teacher education indicates an increasing role for the laboratory school and its instructional staff, since that staff is made up of practicing professionals who can understand the needs of, and who have the trust of, classroom teachers. One developing role for these professionals is the county education agent, a full time teacher education professor who provides services in local schools akin to the role of the agricultural county agent. (MJB)

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NEW PATHS FOR AMERICA'S LABORATORY SCHOOLS

by

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An Address delivered to the School of Education, Indiana State University, May 3, 1978.

Laboratory schools have long been a distinctive part of American teacher education. However, in the last two decades many lab schools were closed. This does not mean the concept of a college teaching laboratory was repudiated. During that same period, new lab school facilities were opened on campuses across the country; some as replacements, but importantly, others at colleges and universities choosing to initiate lab schools as an adjunct to their teacher education programs.

Prior to the 1960's many doctoral researches into the role, function, and research undertaken within lab schools appeared. The majority of these dissertations seemed to originate at Columbia University, University of Missouri, and the University of Florida.

Since that time, comparatively few doctoral candidates chose to seriously research the lab school. Perhaps this reflected the malaise of lab schools in the minds of higher education. The few dissertations written dealt with the reasons for the lab schools' demise, only backhandedly dealing with the reasons for survival of the remainders or the real

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values of maintaining and enlarging the laboratory school concept.

One of the more prevalent reasons for disbanding lab schools was expense. Whether real or imagined, the presumed expense of operating a lab school seemed to outweigh educational value to legislative bodies seeking to trim appropriations. The State of California closed almost a dozen lab schools in its state college system in 1971 without advanced warning.

Illinois chose to eliminate their lab schools similarly. This development was astonishing to me. On the two occasions I visited the Northern Illinois University lab schools, I was impressed to say the least. My imagination was almost boggled, to tell you the truth, with the facilities, the faculty, the research being conducted, and the coherent sense of direction of that laboratory setting. How a state could choose to eliminate such a vital institution is still beyond me. I am afraid Illinois will be the loser.

Other lab schools I had visited before that time simply didn't compare to the scope and contribution of the N.I.U. lab school. Yet they are still in business. While not necessarily flourishing, they are surviving and maintaining their status quo.

We might take a look at some of the research to gain insight as to the relative strengths of the surviving lab schools and from these findings chart a path for a successful lab school of the 1980's.

A major reason for establishing lab schools was to have them as a place for student teaching. All student teaching for an institution was done within the lab school. Many of the supervising teachers also taught the college methods courses as well. As college enrollments increased, this was no longer practical.

In 1967, Clifford Rotton, University of Mississippi, studied the reasons why lab schools were discontinued. He investigated both surviving lab schools and those which had been discontinued and compared them. In regard to student teaching, he found that the schools which had been discontinued listed student teaching as their number one function, whereas the lab schools still operating listed observation as the number one function.

In 1968, Charles Benson, Colorado State College, also studied the problem. He contacted the administrators of the same discontinued lab schools. He made one finding that profoundly bothers me. The administrators of discontinued lab schools as a group felt that the function of the lab school could be done as well by the public school.

If the discontinued lab schools of that time were in fact concentrating on student teaching primarily, and if their own administrators felt that student teaching could be done as well in public schools, they obviously didn't have very strong reason for being.

By 1970, when Curtis Howd, the now retired Director of the Ball State University Lab School, studied the nation's lab

schools, he found student teaching was no longer their major task. What then were the tasks for lab schools?

David Cornthwaite, associated with the lab school at Towson State College in Maryland, used for his doctoral research the data of the study he helped Howd collect and analyze for the National Association of Campus and University Lab Schools. He listed the functions of campus lab schools as follows:

1. Research
2. Observation
3. Demonstration
4. Participation

The research function continues as one of the most valuable contributions by lab schools to American education. Yet, the assessment of the research function by lab schools is less than unanimous. Beginning with the one area of agreement that I could find--the amount of time a lab school should spend in research--let's look into some of the views held about it. Benson's study found both school of education faculties and lab school faculties agreeing that 9-10% of a lab school's effort be devoted to research.

Beyond this, agreement vanished. In fact, Benson's study went on to reveal that in 1968, school of education faculties around the country felt that lab school faculties lacked the skill to both design and conduct research projects! In loyalty to the academics with whom I've been more closely allied in the last few years than lab school teachers, these

attitudes might be justified considering that few lab school teachers possessed the terminal research degree in education.

Happily, many colleges, and I understand that Indiana State was one of these, recognized this. They involved the lab school faculties in research planning sessions and made a conscious effort to upgrade their research competencies. At Northern Illinois, I know that the lab school faculty had developed to the point where they regularly screened all research proposals. Consequently the research in the lab school was of very high quality.

Shortly before his death, a number of us had luncheon with Carelton Washburn in East Lansing, Michigan. Our group had just visited his famous Crow Island School. It was intensely interesting for us to hear Washburn relating how his original training as a research chemist led him to the dictum "every teacher should be a researcher."

I believe this, too--especially for lab school teachers!

Washburn took the lead in involving his faculty in research. Remember, this was in the mid twenties when few teachers had the master's degree. He was forced to build their competencies in research; and he did so far beyond the "introduction to educational research" found today in most master's programs. It was the teachers' own research efforts, for example, that led to the rudimentary set of behavioral objectives and competency based instruction characterized today as the "Winnetka Plan."

Washburn did in the public schools what lab schools should have been doing all along. It was an ongoing, non obtrusive form of research that was a part of instruction. This measure, I feel is the key to both improvement of instruction and the success of the research function of the lab school.

In contrast, some lab schools engaged in a type of research that shuttled children in and out of the school to fit needs of projects rather than the needs of children. In some cases, the experiment was such that some children lost out on important skills. The receiving schools had to rebuild both the pupils' skills and morale.

High risk research in education is absolutely necessary if we are to improve our profession. It can be done in the lab school perhaps better than anywhere else. It must be done, however, within guidelines I'd like to enumerate:

First, research should be an ongoing process that complements, not disrupts the education of children.

Secondly, the lab school, when undertaking to experiment, promises parents that it will maintain the child's normal acquisition of skills; promising, also, to implement remedial instruction if necessary.

Thirdly, that to design such research within the above guidelines, there will be close coordination and planning between the lab school faculty and the school of education faculty.

Fourthly, the lab school faculty shall have ultimate review of the suitability of each research project proposed.

The second major function of lab schools is that of observation. It was inculcated in us as teacher education students that real life experience was the key to learning. Yet college instructors as a group have ignored this--not only regularly, but nearly habitually. To hear our students tell it, teacher educators seem to be the worst offenders.

Observing a certain practice after hearing it described in class makes the whole concept more meaningful. It stimulates questions to ask of the instructor the next time you see him. What about the discussions in class dealing with the developmental characteristics of children?

Considering that many of our education majors haven't seen a live six year old since their own seventh birthday, they need a chance to observe six year olds in action. What better place is there than a campus lab school?

Pedagogically it makes sense! If observing children is to be a part of a college methods course, there is also logistical soundness for providing observations in the lab school. Just walk from the college classroom; pupils and teachers used to living in a fishbowl environment; an accepting faculty having the time and inclination to interpret what is going on--all these make the lab school the ideal place for observation.

The third function and closely allied to observation is the demonstration role. When requested, lab school teachers

offer up a demonstration of a specific teaching technique to illustrate and illuminate a professor's lecture. This is more sophisticated than just a random observation by a college student.

Ideally, there should be so much of it that the lab school administrator would need a full time secretary at a computer terminal just to keep track of it all. Full utilization of the lab school for demonstration purposes implies, again, closer interaction between lab school and college of education faculties.

Integral with the function of observation is the whole issue of curriculum of the lab school. If we're going to serve up the things we've had on the stove for years, we might as well close up shop. A lab school must serve as a magnet for new and exemplary curriculum. This will involve letting people know that the lab school is ready, able, and willing to pioneer materials and disseminate the results. In short, a sales campaign beyond the confines of the campus is necessary to power this magnet to attract new materials and ideas.

An extension of this provides a variety of programs for special education and pre-school pupils as well as conventional grade and subject matter organizations. The lab school can demonstrate to schools how handicapped children of all description may be accommodated and educated to their fullest capacity. If the lab school organizes quickly in this area, it can well serve as a national leader in an area both threatening and perplexing to educators all across America.

Cornthwaite's fourth function of the lab school is that of participation. I believe that this is possibly becoming a more important function than when his study was completed in 1972. Participation is one of the key functions of a lab school, I feel, to sustain and intensify the motivation of undergraduate teacher education students.

My undergraduates for years came to me complaining they wished they could have had some experience with children earlier than they did. Does that sound familiar?

Yet many colleges offer no education courses for freshmen. Maybe at the late sophomore year they offer a survey course--from a book, not from kids. My students wanted to see kids, to be around kids, to work with kids in some sort of a teaching/tutorial capacity.

Northern Arizona University finally offered an elective "field experience" course wherein students could go into the schools to work as teacher aides. To our surprise, within two semesters, we were generating enough student credit hours to justify one F.T.E. When given the opportunity to be with children, our students proved their point with their tuition dollar.

This type of 'participation' is fairly unsophisticated. It could be done as well off-campus in public or private schools and other youth activities. A more sophisticated aspect of participation is where students are scheduled into lab

school classrooms for tutoring or teaching short lessons as part of their methods courses.

After seeing the success of the generalized 'field experience', N.A.U. designed a minimum of six semester hours of field experience at certain points of its elementary and special education programs to give students experience in classroom techniques prior to their big step of student teaching.

These specialized participatory experiences are ideally provided in the lab school. As with demonstration and research, the successful participation experience depends upon close involvement of both school of education and lab school faculties.

The ultimate form of classroom participation implied in Cornthwaite's analysis of lab school functions is that of student teaching. Student teaching still has a place in the lab school. There should be provision for assignment to students' personal choice of supervising teachers. The lab school is also a necessity for assignment of students with special needs.

Notwithstanding the discontinuance of lab schools for reasons of "finances" they are still alive and well across the country. More well, it seems, if they structure their services to include research, observation, demonstration, participation, and less towards student teaching. From what I've seen here at Indiana State, your lab school is fulfilling these roles rather well and consequently has the support of its many constituents.

I'd like to venture forth now with some new directions as I see them for lab schools in the 80's.

I can't claim this particular point is a new direction,

but the public's concern with it is of such magnitude that I had to include it here. I mentioned it briefly when I discussed the research function of the lab school. This is that the lab school conduct itself in a humanistic, child centered manner with the highest principles of child growth and development ever before it.

Indiana State Lab School has a wonderful philosophy for itself which embodies these. Yet a lot of lab schools haven't made such a philosophy operational. And they are suffering for it.

In February, your colleague, Dr. Marvin Henry presided over the annual conference of the Association of Teacher Educators. One point that was made by nearly all of the speakers was that in the years to come, the colleges and universities would be moving much of their teacher education programs and teacher inservice programs to the field--if they wanted to survive.

Let me share with you three predictions for teacher education offered to that conference by Dr. Lon Luty, the Superintendent of Schools, Globe, Arizona, a copper mining community in the mountains east of Phoenix. His predictions were representative of many of the speakers:

1. Teacher educators must go into the field to teacher centers
2. Teacher educators must become more targeted to special problems and populations
3. The entire profession must participate in designing teacher education programs

It might seem at first hearing to be out of place making these recommendations to a group of teacher educators who have been traditionally more campus-bound than any others.

Despite what you may feel about your location, your titles and degrees, your status, your heavier teaching loads, you are members of the school of education! If schools of education are going to meet the challenges of the times outlined by Lon Luty and others we've been hearing, the lab school teachers are going to be the ones who'll do the most to do it. They'll do most because to put it simply, they are the ones best able by inclination and strategic location to do so.

The prevailing current in public education today is that teachers want a role in decision making. This covers such issues as budgets and salary to designing certification requirements doing away with so many "irrelevant education courses."

Teachers' demands for participation in educational decision making are being met. Some reflect teachers' frustration with their college training. Examples are certification requirements limiting the number of education courses allowable in undergraduate teacher programs. One state has even taken the unparalleled action of doing away with the fifth year requirement for permanent certification.

Despite such moves, one positive development has been the federal funds for teacher centers. Teacher centers will be around for a while, I am sure. They are one of the most popular vote getters our congressmen have discovered for a

long time. Some of my colleagues simply splutter and froth over the regulations. Their straw men are those regulations putting the control of the teacher centers in the hands of teachers.

This doesn't bother me. The regulations also specify that at least one teacher educator be on the same advisory board the teachers have their alleged control. I'm sure that teacher centers will opt for inservice different from our standard offerings of courses normally leading to advanced degrees. However, I can't share the gloom of my colleagues because I'm convinced that the teaching profession will neither want nor be able to discard higher education from their efforts to better the profession.

Teachers may feel constraints in communicating with some college professors, but I've observed that they readily work with lab school teachers. Let's face it. Our lab school teachers are on the firing line every day. They talk teachers language. They are accepted as teachers. They are teachers.

Hence, there is no one better suited for working in the field with teachers for inservice than the lab school teacher. They have the acceptance of the profession. They have the additional training to provide services to teachers. For those areas out of their immediate expertise, they have the connections and skill in bringing someone else in to solve the problem. And believe it or not, the lab school teacher has a little more flexible working schedule in terms of institutional relief to get out into the field than many academic professors.

So I for one am counting on the lab school teacher being in a unique position to provide leadership for teacher in-service and teacher center liaison in the 1980's.

Lab school teachers have always had to prioritize between their pupils and their students. Now I propose to add a third dimension to their service and still another priority to consider. I foresee that lab school teachers will represent higher education on every coordinating committee of teacher centers within the state.

Their participation will be more than name only. They will have entree to both worlds--teaching and higher education--and consequently will fulfill a role as broker in the whole teacher inservice scheme. This service will by necessity take place away from the campus in the many small districts or consortia of districts put together to provide efficient, relevant teacher inservice.

Now to take the role of the lab school teacher in the 1980's one step further. Another idea we've explored in the underpopulated reaches of the west, is locating a full time teacher education professor in the field who performs services in local schools akin to the role of the agricultural county agent. In fact, we've tentatively identified the person as an "educational county agent."

We have seen in many different projects that the continued presence of a college professor in a local school does more than anything else to spur an increased professionalism. The educational county agent will be in the right place at the right time to recognize this interest and channel services to

where they are needed.

The concept has been accepted and legitimized to the extent that one Title IV-C grant was awarded to test its feasability in Arizona. Organized basically to provide services to first and second year teachers new to target schools, the project uses the educational county agent to assist new teachers and their "helping" teachers develop individualized professional growth programs.

I see two ways in which the lab school teacher may influence this concept. First a reservoir of trained educational county agents exists today in the faculties of our nation's lab schools. By training, experience, and interests, the lab school teacher is admirably suited for that task.

Secondly, if the idea catches hold, we will need training programs for county agents. The lab schools of the country can provide some of the best leadership for the training of educational county agents.

In conclusion, in the last few years we have seen the role of the campus laboratory school change from primarily training student teachers to a role emphasizing four functions of research, observation, demonstration, and participation, we have also seen the role of the lab school teacher change.

From what we can glimpse of the future directions of teacher education, we can see that lab school teachers will have an increased role in working directly with inservice teachers away from campus. This role is crucial to maintaining the position of teacher education institutions. While demanding

more than ever before from the over burdened lab school teacher, I am confident that they will meet these challenges and become new educational leaders of a special kind.

The next decade will be a critical period in American teacher education. Lab schools will be in the forefront of both preservice and inservice teacher education.

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